

Perhaps there are two sides to Religion, one the art of living and the other the art of dying. Of course the two are connected and in another paper one could discuss the metaphysical nature of birth and death and possible metempsychosis; but that is not the focus here. The 'art of dying' is a term taught to me by the cult of Hare Krishna. Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada said many times something along the lines of 'Many are teaching the art of living but few are teaching the art of dying'. It is hard to know where to begin with what I want to say because you have likely not had the experience of Vaishnavism like myself. In a nutshell their paradigm is of purifying the Consciousness through a life of Devotional Service and returning to the greater quadrant of all creation 'the Spiritual World' at the end of this life. Of course it is SO much more than these few short words imply.

It is this fixation on death and afterlife which seems prevalent in most World Religion, that interests me here, and the subtler sciences of the art of living, which we in the West have (at large) failed to catch up to our Eastern ancestors benchmark. The Christian tradition certainly once knew and was emblematic of these seemingly esoteric practices; but I suspect an observation that many Christians living and working in this high tech, helter skelter world would actually agree about the waning of prescriptive rules and regulations. Things like, No Sex Before Marriage, and No Masturbation are like the cardinal virtues that society has mostly decided to do away with. I have no experience of No Sex Before Marriage so I cannot comment on it; but we do have some experience of sexual continence or to use the more deepening term 'Brahmacarya' - the Hindu tradition is very much in unison with the old Christian ideal of 'Sacred Lovemaking', Chastity and Directing the Sexual Urge to a Higher Purpose. It is this last that shall be the focus of this essay.